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Tim Bath | Kokomo Tribune

Workers place panels at a new solar park at the old Continental Steel site, at the corner of Park and Markland avenues.

Editorial: Three cheers for solar park

As Tribune reporter George Myers wrote in his front-page story Wednesday, the finish line is in sight for Kokomo's new solar park.

It will be only a few weeks before the 21,000 solar panels will be operational at the former Continental Steel plant site. When it starts

working 7 megawatts of energy will be produced by the new development, enough to power between 500 and 1,000 homes.

This is fantastic news. We are taking a 183-acre, former-Superfund site poisoned by industry and turning it into a useful generator of clean, renewable energy.

“Operations resulted in contaminated soil, sediments, surface water and groundwater with volatile organic compounds, polychlorinated biphenyls and several metals, including lead,” according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Though cleanup was finished in 2011, lead contamination is still being detected in nearby soil. Also, groundwater testing continues. This is a previously unusable piece of real estate that will now have a vital role in shaping the future of our energy grid.

Add this to the area’s growing use of wind turbines and we are slowly bringing ourselves in line with the realities of the 21st century. Fossil fuels are not only dwindling, they are unsustainable. This is the future. So-called green energy not only means less pollution, it means more jobs for American workers.

“According to The Solar Foundation, as of November 2014, the solar energy industry provided 173,807 direct jobs,” according to the bipartisan nonprofit Environmental and Energy Study Institute. “This is a 21.8 percent

increase in solar jobs from November 2013. Overall, solar jobs growth accounted for 1.3 percent of all new U.S. jobs in 2014. Factoring in indirect and induced job impacts, which amount to 531,200 additional jobs, total employment in the solar energy sector exceeds 705,000 jobs.”

We must embrace these types of initiatives not only for ourselves, but for future generations.